

REVIEW.

The Birds of South-East Devon. By Lewis R. W. Loyd. 176 pp. 6 Illustrations and Map. (Witherby) 1929. 10s. 6d. net.

Up to the present time nearly all local works on ornithology in England have necessarily been based on county lines. The system is not a natural one, and inferior to that planned by Harvie-Brown and Buckley for Scotland, but its convenience is undeniable. In the present volume Mr. Loyd takes a new line, and defines his limits as that part of Devon which lies east of the River Exe. Devon is, as he states, a large county, rich in bird-life, so that the reader is entitled to look for a more intensive treatment than can be found in such works as D'Urban and Mathew's *Birds of Devon*. We must admit that from this point of view we have found the book disappointing. In the first place, after clearly defining the limits of the region covered, the author includes matter which by no stretch of imagination can be said to have any right of inclusion. Thus, F. O. Morris stated in his *History of British Birds* that a Ptarmigan had been shot on Dartmoor "some years since." The record itself is not only incredible, but so vague as to be almost worthless, even if it were within the bounds of possibility. Moreover, the nearest point of Dartmoor lies many miles to the west of the Exe so that we are left wondering on what grounds the statement is referred to and why the species has been given a place in the list at all. The treatment of the Red Grouse, too, is very similar. A record from Dartmoor prefaces the note, and then we are told that it has been introduced to Exmoor, and that a very few pairs "breed on the county border," but we have very grave doubts whether this has ever occurred within Mr. Loyd's limits. An immature Ivory-Gull was shot at Torquay in 1853 and on the strength of this occurrence it also figures in the list, while even more startling is the appearance of the Ferruginous Duck, whose only claim is that one was shot on Kingsbridge Estuary, at least twenty miles beyond the boundary.

Another defect in the work is that no distinction is made between the definitely recorded species and those of doubtful status. No brackets are employed and species such as Richard's Pipit, which has never been either seen or shot, but which the author thinks may have occurred, figures in similar type to the Tree-Pipit, which succeeds it.

Both Orphean and Sardinian Warbler appear in the list, with cross-references to one another showing that both records refer to the same bird. It was certainly recorded originally as an Orphean Warbler, but as it was described by D'Urban (not Mathew, as stated by Mr. Loyd) as "certainly smaller than the Blackcap," there seems to be no doubt that Saunders was right in ascribing the record to the Sardinian Warbler. The only record of the Firecrest is erroneously attributed to Mr. Allen (p. 51).

The references to the original sources of local records are less precise than those given in the *Birds of Devon*, and in the case of some of the rarer breeding species we think that more definite information might have been given to justify the statement that they breed which appears at the beginning of the article. This applies particularly to the Hen and Montagu's Harrier, the Shag, Golden Plover and Dunlin.

The sketch map is very inadequate and gives no idea of the topography of the district, and this aspect of the subject is also entirely ignored by the author. The illustrations are from photographs by the author and include one of Kittiwakes and Guillemots obviously taken on Lundy, which seems quite out of place in the present work. We should have preferred more figures like the frontispiece, illustrating types of local scenery.

On the other hand, the work contains many useful observations from Mr. Walmsley White and others, which are now rendered available for the first time, and any one who wants a convenient reference work on the local birds of a popular character will find Mr. Loyd's work useful.

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